Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A system for assessing risk in financial transactions wherein a customer is purchasing goods or services from a merchant and is proffering payment for the goods or services using a non-cash payment device, the system comprising:

a distributed network of point of sale devices that are distributed throughout a plurality of merchant locations, wherein the point of sale devices are configured to collect and transmit transaction information about the transaction and the proffered payment and are further configured to display requests to the merchant to provide identification information and to allow the merchant to transmit identification information via the point of sale device; and

a risk assessment component that receives the transmitted transaction information, obtains additional merchant parameters from at least one associated memory device, selects, based at least in part on the additional merchant parameters, one or more of a plurality of risk assessment engines to evaluate the transmitted transaction information, and determines, based at least in part on the evaluation, whether the proffered payment for the goods or services via the non-cash payment device should be accepted or declined, wherein the risk assessment component provides a signal indicative of the acceptance or decline to the merchant via the distributed network of point of sale devices, and wherein the risk assessment component further requests additional identification information from the merchant at the point of sale device when the evaluation of the transmitted transaction information indicates that the proffered payment has a risk greater than a pre-selected threshold so as to further determine whether to accept or decline the proffered payment.

2.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 1, wherein the non-cash payment device comprises a payment by check, and wherein the risk assessment component evaluates the risk of accepting the check.

3.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 2, wherein the transmitted transaction information comprises at least one of the check amount, an identification of the merchant, or check identification information.

4.   (Original) The system of Claim 3, wherein the check identification information comprises a MICR code from the check.

5.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 1, wherein the additional identification information requested by the risk assessment component comprises information that identifies the customer so as to facilitate collection on the check.

6.   (Original) The system of Claim 1, further comprising a database, wherein the transmitted transaction information and the additional identification information is stored in the database to facilitate subsequent collection on the check from the customer in the event that payment is not made on the check.

7.   (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein the additional identification information is the customer's telephone number.

8.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 2, wherein the risk assessment component determines whether the additional identification information corresponds to the check identification information in determining whether to accept or decline the proffered payment following receipt of the additional identification information.

9.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 8, wherein the risk assessment component determines whether the additional identification information identifies a customer that is authorized to write checks on the account corresponding to the check.

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10. (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 2, wherein the check is a credit card, and wherein the risk assessment component evaluates the risk of accepting the credit card.

11. (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 10, wherein the transmitted transaction information comprises at least one of the purchase amount, an identification of the merchant, or credit card identification information related to the customer.

12. (Original) The system of Claim 11, wherein the credit card comprises a magnetic strip, and the credit card identification information comprises magnetically stored digital information that is obtained from the magnetic strip on the credit card.

13. (Currently Amended) A system for assessing risk of a financial transaction, wherein a customer purchases merchandise or services from a merchant at a point of sale and proffers a payment in exchange for the merchandise or services, the system comprising:

an interactive device positioned at the point of sale, wherein the interactive device interacts with the merchant at the point of sale by displaying messages in a manner so as to facilitate collection and transmission of information relating to the financial transaction including information about the proffered payment, and wherein the interactive device transmits information indicative of the merchant and the proffered payment; and

an authorization component that receives the transmitted information, obtains additional merchant parameters from at least one associated memory device, selects, based at least in part on the additional merchant parameters, one or more of a plurality of risk assessment engines to generate a risk assessment based at least in part on the transmitted information, and determines from the risk assessment whether to approve or decline the financial transaction in a manner so as to provide a signal indicative thereof to the merchant via the interactive device, and wherein the authorization component further requests additional information relating to the financial transaction from the merchant at the point of sale via the interactive device when the risk assessment indicates that the

financial transaction is of moderate risk so as to further determine whether to accept or decline the financial transaction.

14.   (Original) The system of Claim 13, wherein the authorization component notifies the merchant by displaying a request for additional information on the interactive device prior to authorizing the financial transaction.

15.   (Original) The system of Claim 13, wherein the proffered payment is a check.

16.   (Original) The system of Claim 13, wherein the proffered payment is a credit card.

17.   (Original) The system of Claim 13, wherein the information is transmitted electronically through a computer network.

18.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 13, wherein the transmitted information includes at least one of the payment amount, payment identification information, or merchant identification information.

19.   (Original) The system of Claim 18, wherein the payment identification information includes a MICR code of the payment.

20.   (Original) The system of Claim 18, wherein the payment identification information includes an OCR code of the payment.

21.   (Original) The system of Claim 18, wherein the payment identification information includes an image of the payment.

22.   (Original) The system of Claim 18, wherein the authorization component determines whether the additional information corresponds to the payment identification information so as to determine whether to accept or decline the proffered payment following receipt of the additional information.

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23. (Original) The system of Claim 18, wherein the additional information includes personal identification information that identifies the customer, and wherein the authorization component determines whether the additional information identifies the customer and whether the customer is authorized to use the account corresponding to the payment.

24. (Original) The system of Claim 22, wherein the personal identification information is selected from the group consisting of the customer's telephone number, the customer's mother's maiden name, the customer's place of residence, the customer's zip code, the customer's driver's license number, and a personal identification number (PIN).

25. (Original) The system of Claim 13, wherein the authorization component further comprises a database, and wherein the database stores the transmitted information and the additional information to facilitate collection of a returned payment from the customer in the event that funds are not collected from the payment.

26. (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 13, wherein the interactive device comprises at least one of a display monitor, a key input device, a printer, a magnetic card reader, or a magnetic check reader.

27. (Original) The system of Claim 13, wherein the signal is a message notifying the merchant to approve or decline the financial transaction.

28. (Currently Amended) A system for authorizing a financial transaction, wherein a non-cash payment is exchanged for goods and services, the system comprising:

      a merchant location comprising at least one interactive POS device, whereby messages can be displayed on the at least one interactive POS device prompting collection and transmission of transaction information relating to the financial transaction including information about the non-cash payment;

      a risk assessment component that selects one or more of a plurality of risk assessment engines to generate at least one risk score based at least in part on the

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transmitted information, wherein the risk assessment component determines from the at least one risk score whether to approve or decline the financial transaction in a manner so as to provide a signal indicative thereof to the merchant location via the at least one interactive POS device; and

an interactive processing component associated with the risk assessment component that determines if additional information relating to the financial transaction is needed prior to authorization of the financial transaction, wherein the interactive processing component obtains additional information about the merchant from at least one associated memory device, wherein at least a portion of the additional information about the merchant is utilized in the selection of the one or more of the plurality of risk engines by the risk assessment component, and wherein the interactive processing component further transmits a request for additional information to the merchant location via the interactive POS device in a manner so as to display the request on the interactive POS device when the at least one generated risk score is greater than a pre-selected threshold so that the risk assessment component can use the additional information to further determine whether to approve or decline the financial transaction.

29.   (Original) The system of Claim 28, wherein the merchant location transmits the additional information relating to the financial transaction to the risk assessment component after receiving the request for additional information.

30.   (Previously Amendment) The system of Claim 28, wherein the non-cash payment comprises a payment by check, and wherein the risk assessment component evaluates the risk of accepting the check.

31.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 30, wherein the transmitted transaction information comprises at least one of the check amount, an identification of the merchant, or check identification information.

32.   (Original) The system of Claim 31, wherein the check identification information comprises a MICR code from the check.

33.   (Original) The system of Claim 32, wherein the risk assessment component determines whether the additional information corresponds to the check identification information in determining whether to accept or decline the non-cash payment following receipt of the additional information.

34.   (Original) The system of Claim 33, wherein the risk assessment component determines whether the additional information identifies a customer that is authorized to write checks on the account corresponding to the check.

35.   (Original) The system of Claim 28, wherein the additional information requested by the interactive processing component comprises information that identifies the customer so as to facilitate collection on the non-cash payment.

36.   (Original) The system of Claim 28, further comprising a database, wherein the transmitted transaction information and the additional information is stored in the database to facilitate subsequent collection on the non-cash payment from the customer in the event that funds are not collected on the non-cash payment.

37.   (Original) The system of Claim 28, wherein the additional information is the customer's telephone number.

38.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 28, wherein the non-cash payment is a credit card, and wherein the risk assessment component evaluates the risk of accepting the credit card.

39.   (Previously Amended) The system of Claim 38, wherein the transmitted transaction information comprises at least one of the purchase amount, an identification of the merchant, or credit card identification information related to the customer.

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  40. (Original) The system of Claim 39, wherein the credit card comprises a magnetic strip, and the credit card identification information comprises magnetically stored digital information that is obtained from the magnetic strip on the credit card.

  41. (Currently Amended) A method of assessing risk in financial transactions, wherein goods or services are being purchased by a customer from a merchant by the customer proffering a promissory payment, the method comprising:

    ~~transmitting~~ receiving transactional information about the proffered payment and the merchant [[to]] at a risk assessment component;

    obtaining additional information about the merchant from at least one associated memory device;

    selecting, based at least in part on the obtained additional information about the merchant, one or more of a plurality of risk assessment engines to evaluate the proffered payment;

    evaluating the proffered payment utilizing the one or more selected risk assessment engines to assess the risk of accepting the proffered payment as payment for the goods or services;

    transmitting an acceptance or decline decision to the merchant following the evaluation of the proffered payment to advise the merchant whether to accept the proffered payment;

    requesting additional information from the merchant when the evaluation of the proffered payment indicates that the risk of accepting the payment falls within the moderate risk category; and

    [[(vii)]] transmitting the additional information in response to the request for the additional information. ~~of act (v).~~

  42. (Original) The method of Claim 41, wherein transmitting the acceptance or decline decision to the merchant is based at least in part on the additional information.

43. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 41, wherein the proffered payment comprises ~~proffering the promissory payment includes proffering~~ a payment by check, and wherein evaluating the payment by check includes assessing the risk of accepting the check.

44. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 43, wherein ~~transmitting~~ receiving transactional information includes transmitting a MICR code from the check.

45. (Previously Amended) The method of Claim 44 wherein requesting additional information includes requesting at least one of the check amount, an identification of the merchant, or check identification information.

46. (Original) The method of Claim 45, wherein requesting additional information includes requesting information that identifies the customer so as to facilitate collection on the check.

47. (Original) The method of Claim 46, wherein evaluating the proffered payment to assess the risk includes determining whether the additional information corresponds to the check identification information in determining whether to accept or decline the proffered payment following receipt of the additional information.

48. (Original) The method of Claim 47, wherein evaluating the proffered payment to assess the risk includes determining whether the additional information identifies a customer that is authorized to write checks on the account corresponding to the check.

49. (Original) The method of Claim 41, further comprising storing the transaction information including the additional information in a database, wherein storing the transmitted transaction information and the additional identification information in the database facilitates subsequent collection on the promissory payment from the customer in the event that funds are not collected from the promissory payment.

50.   (Original) The method of Claim 41, wherein requesting additional information includes requesting the customer's telephone number.

51.   (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 41, wherein <u>the proffered promissory payment comprises</u> ~~proffering the promissory payment includes proffering~~ a payment by credit card, <u>and</u> wherein evaluating the payment by credit card includes assessing the risk of accepting the credit card.

52.   (Previously Amended) The method of Claim 51, wherein requesting additional information includes requesting at least one of the purchase amount, an identification of the merchant, or credit card identification information related to the customer.

53.   (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 52, wherein <u>the transactional information comprises</u> ~~proffering a payment by credit card includes obtaining~~ credit card identification information <u>obtained</u> from a magnetic strip on the credit card, wherein the magnetic strip comprises magnetically stored digital information that is indicative of the credit card identification information.